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ABSTRACT

As early as the 1930s Freud proclaimed that a mature personality is one capable of both love and loving, and constructive work and creativity. Gedo (1997) also advocated that the major components of mental health are love and work. This study looked at two major components of mental health, love and work, in the lives of Hong Kong young people. A focus group method was used to ask questions about work lives and love lives, and the resulting information was used to generate a questionnaire. The findings that levels of education, occupational status, and income positively correlate with satisfaction with work lives correlated with earlier research. Subjects who adopt more active and constructive ways of adjusting themselves to their work lives were more mentally healthy and satisfied. Females scored higher than males on items measuring quality relationships. This reflected a phenomenon that male subjects were less aware of such importance and they were less satisfied with their love lives. These findings suggest the need to help make males more able to maintain intimate relationships. (Contains 11 references.) (JDM)

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The adjustment of young employees to their love lives and work lives

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1. Introduction

As early as the thirties, Freud (1952) had proclaimed that a mature personality is one capable of love and loving and constructive work and creativity. Gedo (1997) in his neo-psychoanalytic position, also advocated the similar: the major component of mental health are love and work. In concern with these, the YWCA of Hong Kong , with the present researcher, tried to study these two aspects of lives of Hong Kong young people. In Hong Kong, young people are defined by an upper limit of forty-one years old. People over this age are not entitled for Excellent Youth Award.

2. Methodology

To start with, the present researcher tried to explore the scope of the study. To avoid, as far as possible, super imposing preconceived constructs onto the research, the researcher decided to use the method of Focus Group. From the findings of the Focus Group, a questionnaire for a mass survey will then be generated.

2.1 Focus Group

Starting from November, 1997, five Focus Groups of size 18 had been conducted. The time gap between each Focus Group was conducted was a fortnight. In each Focus Group, there was one recorder, one observer and one interviewer. The rest of the fifteen members were invited because of their occupation. Taken together, the members of the five Focus Groups summed up to a proportional sampling frame of the Hong Kong economically active people, by age and occupation. (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1998, pp. FB15).

The present researcher had considered the dilemma of heterogeneous groups vs homogenous groups. The considerations centered around the occupations of participants. In heterogeneous groups, there are chances that members are exposed to ideas, attitudes and values not typical of themselves and are thus more stimulating. The result will be that the interview will generate more findings from more perspectives. On the other hand, participants may become more reluctant to talk with people from different backgrounds.

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The researcher decided not to anticipate about what would happen, but test the possibilities empirically. Thus the first Focus Group was heterogeneous. It was found that participants from lower social classes dressed causal and talked less. Participants from upper classes dressed smart or formal and were more dominating. The researcher amended it by making the second Focus Group homogenous. The atmosphere then became full of life. From the third Focus Group onwards, all groups were homogenous.

The flow and the questions of the Focus Groups were semi-structured and non-directive. The questions discussed were:

About their work lives -
What are the factors that concern you with the satisfaction of your work live? Why?
How would you enhance these factors?
Have you ever tried it out?
How effective do you think they are?

About their love lives
What are the factors that concern you with the satisfaction of your love live? Why?
How would you enhance these factors?
Have you ever tried it out?
How effective do you think they are?

2.2 Mass survey

From the findings of the Focus Group, a questionnaire was designed. It was then administered to a proportional sampling frame, by age and occupation, of the Hong Kong economically active population. Since the questionnaire must contain an in-built mechanism to validate itself, the present researcher decided to use the Subjective Mental Health Scales (Chiu, 1994) as measures for concurrent validity. Subjective Mental Health Scales (SMHS) was derived from a mass research about the indigenous mental health of Hong Kong people. It contained two scales: SMHS1 and SMHS2.

SMHS1 measures the extent people think they are socially desirable. To be socially desirable, in Chinese culture, one must be smart in social situations, work situations and the like. One must be sociable, liked, friendly, co-operative, responsible, honorable and adaptive.

SMHS2 measures perceived self-sufficiency. The Chinese culture encourage people to be self-sufficient in many aspects of their lives, such as school lives, work lives, social lives, family lives. To be self-sufficient, one must be capable enough to lead a decent life. It is tied with the perceptions of abilities and achievement. For most of the time, achievements are norm referenced.

The rest of the questionnaire, Part 2 to Part 8 measures about what subjects regarded as important in their love lives and work lives and the ways they cope with it in case something

happened. In Part 8, there were two saline items which asked subjects directly how satisfied they were with their lives. e.g. How satisfied are you with your love life? And How satisfied are you with your work life? Part 9 measures demographic data.

3. Analysis and findings

3.1 Criteria validity

To establish concurrent validity, the Subjective Mental Health Scales were correlated with the two items on satisfaction with work lives and love lives. It was found that all correlations were strong and significant. The two items were thus validated. The two validate items then took important roles in subsequent analysis.

The item on work satisfaction was then correlated with parts of the questionnaire that measure work lives. The item on satisfaction with love lives was then correlated with parts of the questionnaire that measure love lives. A lot of significant findings were found. It was found that people who were more mentally healthy tended to approach both the people and the task in their work lives in active and constructive manner. They use similar approaches in their love lives are well: being active and constructive.

3.2 Work lives

What subjects regarded as important in their work lives that correlated with satisfaction with their work lives were the motivating factors in the world of work. What they worried in case would happen were about the maintenance factors in the world of work. Maintenance factors are important to maintain live, such as making ends meet. Motivating factors are important to make employees feel at home with they work and enjoy working. (Herzberg, 1987).

When they came upon difficult tasks, mentally healthy subjects tended to adopt problem solving approach by means of gathering information and analyzing both themselves and the task. They would upgrade their knowledge and skills whenever necessary. They would learn from informed colleagues or take extension courses. When they come across difficulties in dealing with people, they would reflect on themselves, view the problem from different perspectives, adopt problem solving approach or try to be accommodating. When they had difficulties with the policies in their organizations, they would analyze the situation, adopt problem solving strategies and prepare themselves for the worse. They also found these ways effective.

3.3 The data set was collected over seven months from January 1998 to July 1998. During that period, Hong Kong experienced an economic recession. Many companies used cuts and layoffs to reduce lose. Unemployment rates had gone up. It aroused an atmosphere that people worried about the shrink of the maintenance factors of their work lives. The researcher tried to find out if it had any effect on Subjective Mental Health Scales. By using T-test to compare the performance of subjects on SMHS in 1994 with those on 1998. It was discovered that SMHS1 had gone down significantly. Since the common factor to have influenced the population was the recession. It was concluded that the recession had caused mental health as measured by

subjects' perception of their Social Desirability (SMHS1). The influences were marked poorer performance of the

following items:

- feel satisfied, delighted and happy most of the time.
- understands and accepts tides in life are natural
- honest
- co-operative
- force myself to relate to someone who I dislike and pretend to be friendly
- like my family life
- live orderly and have sufficient time for rest
- can understand the situation I am in
- feel easy with both the societal norms and my impulses
- a good listener to others' expression
- friendly
- accept responsibilities for my own actions

3.4 Love lives

What subjects regard as important in their love lives that correlated with satisfaction with their love lives were whether their partners took the relationship serious. When their relationship deteriorated or a third party appeared, they would reflect on themselves, consider the maturity of the relationship, enhance more effective communication with the partner, became more caring and understanding, and finally would respect the wish of the partner. Subjects also found these strategies effective.

3.5 When the satisfaction of love lives scores were compared between both genders, it was found that female subjects tended to be more satisfied with their love lives then males. It was discovered that females scored higher on all of the following items - all, except the first item, were relationship enhancing:

- expect their partners to be more ambitious.
- communicate more with their partners.
- more reflective.
- consider about the maturity of the relationship in case.
- more caring and understanding.
- more committed.
- respect their partners more

3.6 Demographic analysis

When subjects demographic variables were compared, it was found that subjects with higher education, higher occupational status, and higher monthly salary had better Satisfaction with Work Lives and Satisfaction with Love Lives. Subjects with the lowest education, occupational

status and income were both low in their Satisfaction with Work Lives and Satisfaction with Love Lives. Females scored marginally higher on Satisfaction with Love Lives then males.

The findings that levels of education, occupational status and income are positively correlated with satisfaction with work lives are not surprising. In Chiu (1994), it was found that people with better mental health feel satisfied, delighted and happy most of the time. They always have higher levels of education, occupational status and income.

4. Discussion

4.1 Work Lives

As indicated by the above findings, subjects who adopt more active and constructive ways of adjusting themselves to their work lives were more mentally healthy and satisfied. The strategies involved communication, learning, problem solving and

accommodating to challenges. These had indicated that subjects had the good wills to do better. The corollary is that if people who adjust themselves to the world of world with

lesser of these means, their adjustment will likely be less mentally healthy and less satisfied. In Hong Kong, their were only a few industrial social workers and industrial psychologists practicing. The implication is that active and constructive ways of adjusting to the world of work should be further encouraged via company seminars, staff training and development programs .

Employers should know that cuts and layoffs should be their last resort to deal with financing difficulties. The impact upon both employers and employees are tremendous. This saying is not to plea mercy. Employees can always tell whether the management have vision and are capable. They can tell whether the management are doing their jobs well with integrity. People will do their jobs in different manner depending on whether they are managed by coercive power or whether they are managed with honor. The stress generated by the former style of management will result in more faults, antagonism, negativism, absenteeism and passive aggression (Muchinsky, 1993). It will lower employees' problem solving abilities and creativity. It will also do harm to organizational commitment. On the contrary, if employees are managed with honor, employees like their job and the company more. They will devote themselves more when their employers have hard times (Lee, 1997).

4.2 Love Lives

According to Corey and Corey's (1993) Five Major Components of Love, authentic love consists of care, responsibility, respect, knowledge and commitment. Intimacy is represented by understanding, caring and respect. Sherman (1993) point out that quality intimate relationships are characterized by understanding, trust, sharing and equality. Ptacek and Dodge (1995) stated that when relationship deteriorates, if partners have the perception that they are making an effort to cope, their satisfaction will increase. The present research showed female subjects

scored higher than males

on items measuring quality relationship. It thus reflected a phenomenon that male subjects were less aware of such importance and they were less satisfied with their love lives (Basco,

Prager, Pita and Tamir, 1992). Basow (1992) pointed out that males are often less expressive of their feelings and feelings towards their love ones. They thus receive less affectionate feedback, are less understood and feel more frustrated. The present findings seemed to have also discovered the similar.

These findings point to the possibility that males are less capable in maintaining intimate relationships and coping with issues arising. The suggestion here make is to facilitate males to be more responsive to intimate relationships, have the heart to maintain it well. This, opens up a field of developmental work for man: to learn to be a good lover.

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